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REPORT ON MEETING WITH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP:

(In no cases are the names of the people who met with us to be used.)

Dr. Enrique Mignone, lawyer, university administrator
Frederico Westerkamp, physicist, university professor
Rabbi Roberto Gretz
(Westerkamp has studied at Columbia; Gretz at U. of Cincinnati)

The Assembly has a board representing economic, political and labor groups. Includes a Catholic and Methodist bishop, representatives of political parties. It was created prior to the present administration.

The Assembly has workshops, seminars, and tries to publish documents, but that is difficult. Censorship is very strong. The only newspaper that publishes freely is the Buenos Aires Herald. Our last statement we could not get published anywhere; we have no access to radio or tv, though we can print and distribute things ourselves.

A major step last year was a presentation to the Supreme Court where we discussed 1,000 people who have disappeared. The judiciary's hands are tied, however. They ask after people, but the government denies any knowledge of them. Some 20-30,000 writs of habeus corpus have been presented to the lower court, but not one has been honored. Government simply says they don't have the people. A lot of judges have resigned, giving reasons of health or something, but real reason is because they are unhappy with treatment of habeus corpus proceedings.

The government has at least 8,000 identified prisoners, though the government admits to only 4,000 -- 8,000 in jail under executive power, some for actions, some simply for opinions. Our group does not sympathize with terrorists; we just ask for due process.

Of 8,000 in prison legally, 800 have cases pending. Only a few are ever acquitted. Of the 8,000, perhaps 20% are in jail for some activity, the rest for their opinions. Only parents are allowed to visit; not their

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S20000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
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Date ___ Declassify on ___ Reason ___
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lawyers.

Some prisoners are treated better than others. Many are threatned with torture. (Westerkamp's son, a leftist, age 24, is in jail and has been tortured. He was an activist student but never engaged in terrorism. Torture - electric shock, beaten with chains, kicked)

The co-chairman of the Assembly, a man active in the teachers union, was arrested 5 months ago. Disappeared for 12 days. Then the government produced him. His wife visits him. The first few days in jail he was subjected to water torture. There are no charges against him.

The most severe problem -- We estimate 15-25,000 who have completely disappeared, picked up by the armed forces. Many have been killed, some are in concentration camps, torture is routine. It is deliberate government policy to kill them. Some bodies have been found in rivers, ocean. Government just says: "This is a dirty war." What should USG do?

Rabbi: We are very pleased with pressure from the Carter administration. Argentine government is very conscious of its image. Pressure from outside is more effective than from inside. Cutting off military aid is a good move. Pressure is good up to the point where it might break US links with Argentina. You shouldn't cut everything off. This is the most unpopular government, but it is more because of falling standards of living than human rights, as far as the average man in the street is concerned.

MEETING WITH DELEGATION OF ARGENTINE-ISRAELI ASSOCIATIONS:

(Reps were a lawyer, an advertiser, and an Italian translator)

Spokesman insisted there is no official antisemitism, and the populace is not antisemitic, but acknowledged there are no Jews in the army and very few anywhere in government or military.

The group is a federation of 130 organizations. (Embassy spokesman says they represent a conservative viewpoint within the Jewish community.)

Spokesman says they are preoccupied with neo-nazi organizations and their publications. They carry out a vigorous fight and the government has been forced to act against those publications. Nobody is detained because he is Jewish. But if he happens to be detained, he is treated worse than others. They are very worried about this problem and do not hesitate to speak out about it. They believe the government is beginning to be aware of the need to take action against antisemitism in the repressive forces. So we are careful not to cause adverse reaction by making the wrong public statements. Worried about Timmerman. Only the Buenos Aires Herald has published the fact that Timmerman hasn't been charged with anything. His son was released and allowed to emigrate to Israel. Jews may emigrate to Israel at will, but not many want to do that. Were Jews disproportionately represented in the leftist groups? - No.

It is difficult to visit prisoners, whether Jewish or not, though rabbis are often successful in doing so. Do any Jewish people think as Argentine government does, apparently, that Timmerman did obtain his money illegally? Spokesman said he did not personally believe that, but can't speak for Jewish community. President Videla has said Timmerman is being held only for investigation of financial things. We say, let him out so he can get his documents together and make his case.

To Jacobo Kovadlov, the American Jewish Committee rep -- We know only what has been in the Times and Post. It was a mistake to close down the American Jewish Committee office here because now we have nobody to relate to. Spokesman said Kovadlov apparently left for personal reasons; they have talked to him in New York since he left.

MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF PLAZA DE MAYO:

The mothers -- Sra. Maria de la Gard; Sra. Marta de Vazquez; Sra. Maria del Rosario de Cerrutti; Sra. Juanita Pargament. (Again, names not to be used. They are afraid because of this meeting. But they say it would only help them if members, say, made speeches on the House floor referring to this meeting, but without names.)

The mothers parade to the plaza each Thursday afternoon at 3:30 p.m., about 100-150 strong. They do not ask that their sons be released; only that they be told where their sons are, and that they receive due process. Some disappeared 20 months ago and we don't know if they are alive or dead.

The group published an ad in La Prensa and La Nacion in October. No repercussions. But after another ad on December 10, signed by 1,000 mothers and therefore much more attention-getting, there has been trouble. Two days before the ad a group of mothers were picked up at church. The day the article was published a mother and a French nun were kidnapped at home. We believe repression since that day has increased a lot. One night a large number of people were imprisoned in another city (La Plata).

There are now 3 or 4 mot hers in custody. We do not know what has happened to them but do not believe they have been killed. But the Sub-Secretary of the Interior has asked us not to go to the Plaza anymore because we make a bad image. We say we will stop when they tell us where our sons are.

One day everybody in the Plaza was taken to jail for 2-3 hours, but treated OK and released. The mothers are more and more fearful. The mothers' stories --

1) My son was a lawyer, a defender of human rights and of those who had been imprisoned. He often went to the jails to visit his clients. One day he was taken from home and has disappeared.

2) Son, age 31, a surgeon, taken 1 year ago. He was not political. I

have absolutely no knowlege of why he was taken.

3) Son was a student of economics at the university. I know of no political activities. But I speculate that someone at the university may have pointed him out as a leftist, something of that sort, and he disappeared.

4) My daughter, 23, a psychologist, and her husband 25, a veterinarian, were picked up 20 months ago from their home. I know of no political activities they were involved in. She was a social worker and concerned with the problems of the lower classes. They were Peronists, but not especially active. We believe she was pregnant with her third child, because the mother (wife of a diplomat in Mexico) received a letter before the arrest indicating that.

What happens to the children in such cases? If the grandparents will keep them, OK. Otherwise, the government may deposit them with a neighbor, or may simply put them out for adoption and the parents are not told where. In one case a grandmother recognized a grandchild who had been placed for adoption with another family.

Do you believe the US is doing all it can? - "Yes. But we would like to see even a little more pressure, though not necessarily sanctions against the Argentine government. The American government is the only hope we have."

Dave Secrest:jr